

Message Text

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R 091625Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
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INFO ZEN AMCONSUL FLORENCE 1688
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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 2143

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, IT, VT
SUBJECT: VATICAN AND ITALY: SNAGS IN CONCORDAT REVISION?

REF: ROME 20631, 19253

1. WHILE THE JOINT VATICAN-GOI COMMISSION WHICH IS NEGOTIATING PROPOSED REVISION OF THE CONCORDAT HAS BEEN MEETING REGULARLY FOR THE LAST TWO MONTHS, A CHORUS OF LARGELY CRITICAL VOICES HAVE RISEN AGAINST THE "ANDREOTTI DRAFT" WHICH THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES AUTHORIZED DECEMBER 3 AS BASIS FOR NEGOTIATIONS (ROME 19253).
2. THE LATEST CRITICISM COMES FROM GROUP OF WELL-KNOWN JURISTS AND SPECIALISTS ON ECCLESIASTIC AND CANNON LAW WHICH MET IN BOLOGNA FEBRUARY 103 TO EXAMINE THE ANDREOTTI DRAFT.
3. THE MAJORITY OF THESE EXPERTS CRITIZED DRAFT BECAUSE IT DOES NOT GO FAR ENOUGH TO PAVE WAY FOR COMPLETE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE AND BECAUSE IT DOES NOT ELIMINATE PRIVILEGES OF CHURCH ENTITIES. ON
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THE LATTER POINT THERE HAS BEEN CONSIDERABLE AND ACRIMONIOUS PUBLIC DEBATE GOING ON SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR WHEN A LONG ARTICLE IN L'EUROPEO ON "VATICAN INC." CHARGED THAT THE VATICAN OWNED A FOURTH OF ROME AND THAT IT WAS DERIVING HUGE MONETARY BENEFITS THROUGH SPECIAL TAX TREATMENT AND LAND SPECULATION. THE VATICAN WAS QUICK TO REJECT THE CHARGES AND HAS PUBLICLY CLAIMED

THAT THE ARTICLE WAS PURPOSEFULLY DISTORTED TO DISTURB CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS. THE RADICAL AND SOCIALIST PARTIES WERE QUICK TO POINT OUT THAT THE GOI COULD NOT IGNORE THE L'EUROPE ARTICLE. SOME INDEPENDENT OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT THE ORIGINAL ARTICLE AS WELL AS OTHERS IN THE LAY PRESS WERE "INSPIRED" WITH PURPOSE OF PRESSURING GOI TO OBTAIN MORE CONCESSIONS FROM THE VATICAN IN THE ONGOING NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE CONCORDAT'S REVISION. (ONE SOURCE TOLD US THAT L'EUROPEO HAD USED AS BASIS OF ITS STORY A PROPERTY REGISTER COMPILED BY THE RADICAL PARTY.)

4. SENATOR GONELLA, THE CHIEF GOI NEGOTIATOR, WHO WAS AN OBSERVER OF THE BOLOGNA CONFERENCE IS QUOTED BY THE PRESS AS SAYING THAT THE JOINT COMMISSION COULD HAVE A DRAFT TO PRESENT TO THE PRIME MINISTER IN LATE FEBRUARY.

5. A GOIC SOURCE CLOSE TO THE NEGOTIATIONS HAS TOLD US THAT WHILE GONELLA'S TIMING MAY BE OPTIMISTIC, THE NEGOTIATORS HAVE BEEN MEETING REGULARLY, THAT GONELLA HAS REMAINED IN CLOSE CONTACT WITH THE "POLITICAL PARTIES" ON THE STATUS OF NEGOTIATIONS, AND THAT THE OVERALL CHANCES FOR PARLIAMENTARY APPROVAL OF THE REVISED "ANDREOTTI DRAFT" REMAIN GOOD. IN ADDITION TO THE SNIPING OF THE EXPERTS, THE OTHER CLOUD ON THE HORIZON IS THE POSSIBILITY THAT FURTHER CHURCH-STATE ACRIMONY ON THE ABORTION ISSUE COULD HAVE A SPILL-OVER EFFECT AND DELAY FOR SOME TIME PARLIAMENT'S CONSIDERATION OF THE

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CONCORDAT. THE KEY TO CONCORDAT REVISION REMAINS THE ATTITUDE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY (PCI). SO FAR, HOWEVER, THERE IS NO INDICATION THAT THE PCI WOULD OPPOSE THE GOI ON THIS ISSUE.BEAUDRY

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